

Breakfast time

THIRD
REMARKS
UPON AN
ESSAY
CONCERNING
Humane Understanding:

in 1711

IN A
LETTER

Address'd to the Author.

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REVIEW

of the *Antiquities of Babylonia*.

MODERN

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(3)

THIRD REMARKS UPON AN ESSAY CONCERNING Humane Understanding.

SIR, Have not yet receiv'd the Favour of your Answer to my Second Letter or Second Remarks upon your Essay about *Humane Understanding*. You ruffled over the First Remarks in a domineering Answer, without giving any Satisfaction to their Contents : but the Second being more full and explicit, I was in hopes you would have been more concern'd to Answer them, and to Answer them more Calmly and like a Philosopher. You best know the reason of your Silence ; but as it will be understood in several ways, so, it may be subject to that Construction amongst others, That you could not satisfie those Objections or Queries, without expositing your Principles more than you had a Mind they should be exposited. You know there is a Sect or Party of Men among us, whom we have much ado to bring to a fair and distinct Account of their Doctrine and Principles : They cannot or will not fix their Notions, and declare them freely to the World, that

they may be impartially examin'd. I hope you do not approve that Method, nor think it worthy of imitation. Yet if to find out Truth, be the End and Design of your Writing, as I believe it is, it must be first known what you Affirm, and what you Deny, before the Matter can be examin'd; especially as to those grand Points that are of common Concern, and which I have made the Subject of my Enquiries: I mean, the Grounds of *Morality and Religion*. And in Prosecution of the same Argument, that we may have a little more Light into your Doctrine, I now desire to know what *Natural Conscience* is, according to your Principles?

I told you in my former Remarks, That I thought it was Necessary as a Ground for Morality, to allow a natural distinction betwixt Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, *turpe & honestum*, Virtue and Vice. And this distinction, I thought, was manifested and supported by *Natural Conscience*: whether amongst those that have or have not External Laws. This, I think, is taught us plainly by the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, when he say, *Those that were without a Law were a Law to themselves*, doing by nature the things contained in the Law, which show the Law written in their hearts; Their Consciences bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing them. The *Gentile* Philosophers and Poets have said the same things concerning natural Conscience, as you cannot but know; And that you must go against the best Authors, Divine or Humane, if you deny to Man natural Conscience, as an original Principle, antecedently to any other Collections or Recollections.

I do not deny that you allow such a Principle as *Conscience* in some sense or other; but consider, pray, how you define it, or what you say is to be understood by it. *Conscience*, you say, is *nothing else but our own Opinion of our own Actions*. But of what sort of Actions, I pray; and in reference to what rule or distinction of our Actions? whether as Good or Evil, or as Profitable or Unprofitable, or as Perfect or Imperfect: Or of all promiscuously, of natural Actions and about things of indifference as well as others. As for instance, whether we have play'd well in a Game at *Chess*, or in a party at *Tennis*, is this matter of *Conscience*? yet we make a judgment of our Actions in these cases as well as other. But tho' they were

imperfect

imperfect in their kind, or not well managed, we feel no Accusation or Remorse of Conscience for it. Surely therefore that Principle ought to be better described and distinguish'd than by such a loose Character of it as makes all our Actions indifferently the Objects of Conscience. I take Conscience to relate to our Moral Actions only, and to the distinction of moral Good and Evil, and such other Differences: Accusing, excusing or justifying us according as we have observ'd, neglected or contemn'd those Differences. This we understand by natural Conscience, and take it to be the Foundation of natural Religion, as that is of Revealed.

Now I do not remember, that, in this sense, you have once nam'd natural Conscience in your Book: tho' you had a fair opportunity for it in your large Discourse about Practical Principles, in your *Third Chapter, Book I.* But it may be, you think there is none truly natural in this Acceptation: However, seeing you own natural Religion, let's consider what you understand by it, and how you can make it subsist without natural Conscience, in that Sense and notion we have given of it: You place natural Religion, I think, in the *Belief of the Being of a God, and of Obedience due to him.* This is good so far as it goes, and is well supported. But the Question is, what Laws those are that we ought to obey, or how we can know them without Revelation, unless you take in natural Conscience for a distinction of Good and Evil, or another Idea of God than what you have given us. That Principle of Conscience, and a true Idea of God with Moral Attributes, being admitted, we have a Foundation for natural Religion: But not being admitted, I do not see by what ratiocination you can collect (antecedently to Revelation) what the Will of God is, what his Laws are, how Promulgated and made known to us; And consequently what we have to direct our Obedience, if we do not know wherein that Obedience consists: I may know there is a King, and that I am bound to obey him; yet if I do not know his Laws, nor what his Pleasure is, I cannot tell when I please him or displease him, obey him or disobey him; if I know not, I say, in what particulars, my Duty and Allegiance are to be express'd and practis'd.

Neither can we think Natural Religion a matter of small concern or consequence, seeing, in virtue of that Principle, without

without any External Laws, so far as we know, *Noah*, and *Job*, not to mention more, have been accounted *Just and Upright in the sight of God*, and mark'd as the particular Favourites of Heaven, by one of the Prophets. (*Ezek. xiv. 14.*) If they had no other Guide or Motive to Vertue and Piety, than your Idea of God and of the Soul, with an arbitrary difference of Good and Evil, I wonder how they could attain to such a degree of Righteousness as would bear that eminent Character, from God and his Prophets. Upon this occasion also we may reflect upon *Natural Faith*, and the Nature of it. You know how it is describ'd by the same Apostle of the Gentiles, *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* And without this Faith, he says, *'tis impossible to please him*, *Heb. xi. 6.* Now how shall a Man in the state of Nature have just grounds of this Faith, if he have no other Idea of God, than that he is an *All-powerful, All-knowing and Eternal Being?* How from this can he prove, that he will be a *Rewarder* of those that seek him? If Goodness and Justice belong to his Essence, as well as those other Perfections, he may from the Idea of God have a good foundation and support of his Faith; and consequently of his Vertue and Piety. But without these, he is left in the dark, as to his fate, or future Reward in another state.

Lastly, As to *Providence*, we cannot tell, from your Principles, how far it will extend. We see Provision is made for the *Subsistence* of Creatures here, that the World may be kept upon the Wheels, and still going: But as to their *Happiness*, as we see it uncertain here, so we cannot prove, from the bare Power and Knowledge of their Maker, what it will be hereafter.

B. 1. c. 3. So much for *Natural Religion*. We return now to *Natural Conscience*, and to what you call *Practical Principles*; whereof you discourse amply in the foremention'd Chapter. As to that Controversie about *Natural Principles*, I think it may turn either way, according as they understand the Terms of the Question; which, in my mind, you have not fairly represented. If by *Principles*, you understand *distinct Knowledge*, that is, *distinct Idea's, and distinct Propositions*; we do not hold *innate Principles* in that sence. Yet so you seem to represent them and their Idea's; and you call them *Characters, fair Characters, indeleble*

indelible Characters, stamp'd, imprinted, engraven in the Mind ; for all those Expressions you use upon that occasion. Now all these Expressions seem to signifie clear and distinct Representations, as Pictures or Sculptures represent their Originals. Does any one assert that there are such express Idea's, express Propositions in the Mind of Man, and an express discernment of their connexion or inconnexion before the use of Reason, or as much before it as after it ? I say, *as much before it as after it* ; for the fullest, clearest, and most distinct Knowledge that we have after the use of Reason, cannot be more amply express'd, than to say it is *imprinted or engraven upon the Mind, in fair and indelible Characters*. You exaggerate the matter, and set the question at what height you please, that you may have the fairer mark to shoot at. If you had reflected upon that common distinction of Knowledge, as *clear or obscure, general or particular, distinct or indistinct*, whereof we have daily Instances in the Life of Man, you might have represented more softly, and more easily conceiv'd those Natural Impressions : which indeed compar'd with perfect Knowledge, are but general, obscure, and indistinct Notices, and yet sufficient for the Purposes to which they are design'd. When a Child feels the difference of bitter and sweet, he knows and understands that difference in some kind or degree ; for it hath its Consequences, and becomes a Principle of Action to him. Now, whether you please to call this Principle, *Knowledge, or Sense, or Instinct, or by any other Name*, it still hath the effect of Knowledge of some sort or other ; and that before this Child hath the Name of *Bitter or Sweet, Pleasant or Unpleasant* : much less can he define what either of them is. We suppose these original Impressions to be like Gold in the Oar, that may be refin'd ; or rough Diamonds, that by polishing, receive a further lustre : or, to come nearer to your similitude, like *Monograms or Sketches*, that want their full Lines and Colours to compleat them ; and yet one may discern what or whom they are made to represent, though imperfectly drawn. I say this only by the bye, that the Question may be better stated ; for my Design, at present, is only to speak of Practical Principles, or what I call Natural Conscience, in reference to the distinction of Moral Good and Evil. Accordingly, I understand by Natural Conscience, a Natural Sagacity to distinguish Moral Good and Evil, or a different perception

ception and sense of them, with a different affection of the Mind arising from it ; and this so immediate as to prevent and anticipate all External Laws, and all Ratiocination. And when I say *Moral Good* and *Evil*, I mean it in contradistinction to *Natural Good* and *Evil*, *Pleasure* or *Pain*, *Conveniences* or *Inconveniences*, which are things of another order and character. This inward Sense we speak of, is simple and irrespective as to those Natural Evils or Goods, They are not its proper Objects ; They may be frequently in conjunction, but not necessarily. By these Rules and Marks, I think it appears sufficiently what I mean by *Natural Conscience*, and I wish you would as freely and fully tell us your Notion of it, so far as it is opposite or different from this ; that by a just state of the Question, we might come more easily to the discovery of Truth. For there are some Questions that are harder to state clearly and distinctly, than to resolve, when so stated.

You will not now say, I believe, That if there was such a Natural Principle in the Soul of Man, Infants or young Children would be able to distinguish Moral Good and Evil : For you might as well expect, that in a Seed, there should be Leaves, Flowers, and Fruit ; or that in the rudiments of an *Embryo* there should be all the Parts and Members of a compleat Body, distinctly represented ; which, in continuance, are fashioned and brought to perfection. This is the case we represent : Such a Principle as *Natural Conscience*, we say, is seated in the Soul of Man, as other original Principles are ; which shew themselves by degrees, in different times, and differently according to other circumstances. Whether you will call this Principle, *Knowledge*, or by any other name (as we told you before) is indifferent to us ; but 'tis a Principle of distinguishing one thing from another in Moral Cases, without Ratiocination ; and is improveable into more distinct Knowledge. We may illustrate this from our Outward Sensations : We can evidently distinguish *Red* and *Yellow* Colours, and yet are at a loss how to define either of them, or to express their difference in words. And so in Tastes, Odours, Sounds, and other sensible qualities.

We are differently affected by their Impressions, and so is a Child, before any Reflection or Ratiocination : though neither of us can give an Idea of the Affection we feel, nor of the particular Modification and Action of the Object whence it arises.

arises. This shews us, that there may be a power in the Soul of distinguishing one thing from another, without Ratiocination: And if in Sensible Qualities, why not also in Moral and Intellectual Relations, such as *Good* and *Evil*, *True* and *False*? As our Outward Senses are sufficient (without distinct Idea's and Propositions) to give us notice of what is convenient or inconvenient to the Body: So those Inward Sensations were design'd to direct us as to what is agreeable or disagreeable, good or hurtful to the Soul. And as in our Speculations we have an obscure and confused Knowledge of what we seek after, or a kind of Presentation of the Truth, before we arrive at a clear and distinct perception of it: so this Principle of discerning Good and Evil, is at first obscure, and rises by degrees into a clearer light; and according to the Improvement that is made of it, into a fuller sense of those Moral Differences.

Now, if this Account of Natural Conscience, or what you call Practical Principles, be true; there are, in my opinion, in your Third Chapter, mention'd before, several Defective Reasonings, or Ill-grounded Suppositions. One I have spoke to, viz. That you represent this Natural Light, or Natural Conscience, like our Idea's or Propositions in Mathematicks, clear and distinct. I do not consider or apprehend it so, but yet sufficient for a general Direction of our Actions and Lives. You say your self, *I deny not that there are Natural Tendencies imprinted on the Minds of Men*, and that from the very first instancy of Sense and Perception, there are some things that are grateful, and others unwelcome to them; some things that they incline to, and others that they shun. Grant us in the Soul such a like Principle, which we name Natural Conscience, as a Spring and Motive of our Actions (for that Virtue you give there to your Principle) in reference to Moral Good and Evil: Or, which I suppose is all one, as a Rule or Direction to our Actions; Grant this, I say, and we desire no more: Give that Principle what Name you please, so it have the same Effect in the Direction of our Actions. Whether it appear sooner or later, and be more or less prevalent, that will not exclude it from being a Natural Principle: 'Tis so in Reason, and Passions, and in our distinguishing some Sensible Qualities, and in what we call *Pudor Naturalis*; yet those Principles are by all accounted Natural.

Ibid. §. 2.
cap. 9.

But to proceed to another of your Suppositions: You seem to make account, that if Conscience was an innate Principle, it should be invincible and indistinguishable, and universally received without doubt or question. Then to prove that it is not so, you bring in several barbarous or semi-barbarous People as your Witnesses; *Mongolians, Tchoupinians, and such others, Gentlemen that are not of my acquaintance*: These are your Witnesses, to prove that there are no practical Innate Principles or Natural Conscience in Mankind. This is like searching Gaols and Prisons, to find Witnesses for a bad Cause. But I except against your Witnesses, as *Persons Infames*, whose Testimony is of no force or validity. 'Tis as if a Man should produce two or three Monsters, or Men of monstrous shapes, and from them pretend to prove, that the Shape of Man is not naturally regular. In the mean time, Sir, as your Plea is weak, in my opinion, so methinks you have an ungrateful Office, To take up all the dirt and filth you can from barbarous People, to throw in the face of Humane Nature. This, some will think an Indignity cast upon Mankind, and a piece of Ingratitude to our Maker. But as to this Principle of Natural Conscience, or Natural Light, whereof we are treating, we do not conceive it such a Light as may not be dim'd, or, it may be, extinguish'd in some People. If there was no other Principle in Humane Nature, than Natural Conscience singly, all Mankind would be more uniform in their Actions and Principles: But seeing Man is made up of various Principles, and such as often interfere one with another, what wonder is it to see some following this, some that, some better, some a worse. There is a Law of the *Members*, as well as of the *Mind*, and these are at war; and sometimes one gets the victory, sometimes the other. Who knows not, that both the Light of Nature and Revelation may be over-power'd by contrary Principles, Appetites, Passions, and present Self-interest? You might bring such Arguments against Christianity, and pretend that there is no such Law given by God, because multitudes of Men, that bear that Character and Denomination, do not live according to its Rules.

Now if you say further, That there are not only rude and barbarous People, but also civiliz'd Nations that have had Practices and Customs contrary to what are call'd the Laws of Nature,

Nature, or Natural Conscience, I think this also is no sufficient Argument against that Principle. You instance in some Practices of the *Greeks* and *Romans*: But were those Practices commended or approved by the generality of Mankind, or by those Nations themselves, according to their Laws and Institutions? Exorbitant Practices against Natural Conscience, are no Proof that there is no such Principle: As a wicked Rebellion in a Kingdom or State, is no good Proof that there are no Laws against it. Nor because there are *Banditti* or *Buccaneers*, or *Commonwealths* that are *Pyrrical*, can we infer that there are no Rules of Common Justice. As on the other hand, it is a strong Proof of Natural Conscience, as the Supreme Law, if we find Instances and Actions in those Heathen States you mention, the *Greeks* and the *Romans*, transcendent or contrary to the Interest of State, and yet receiv'd with general Applause and Approbation. As when a secret Project was offered to the *Athenians*, how they might make themselves the greatest People in *Greece*, the Motion was referr'd to be Examind and Consider'd by *Aristides*, and he made this Report to the Senate; *Mitt auctoritate dixi Plut. in negotiis, pat' edictisq' ibi*: Never was propos'd a more Profitable Project, nor a more Dishonest. Upon which Report it was unanimously Rejected: The sense of Virtue prevailing more than of Profit and Advantage to their State. In like manner, when it was offer'd to *Fabrius*, the Roman General, to take off *Pyrrhus* (a dangerous Enemy, and then in War with *Rome*) by Poison, He nobly abhor'd the Proposal; and instead of giving the Physician, who was the Undertaker, a Reward or Recompence, as he expected, He sent *Pyrrhus* Notice of the intended Treachery, that the Traitor might receive condign Punishment from his own Prince.

These and such like Actions have always been accounted Honourable amongst Men, and leave a sweet Odour and Fragrancy to all Ages in the Names and Memories of their Authors, as of Excellent Persons, and great Examples. There are Two sorts of Tempers and Actions amongst Men, which generally bear that Character of Honourable: First, When we deny our private Interest, whether of Life or Fortune, for the Good of the Publick: Secondly, When we deny both for the sake of Conscience, or for the love of Truth and Virtue.

And if the first of these be call'd *Heretical*, the latter may be call'd *Divine*. As on the other hand, Nothing is more odious or disgusting than a perfidious Man, or a dry Knave, whether he act merely for his own Advantage, or that of his Society, without respect to the Rules of Virtue and Honesty. And if those Rules be neglected more or less by Men, or appear little amongst some People, this is no good Proof that there are no such Principles. As it is no sufficient Argument that there is no Sun in the Firmament, because his Light is obscured in Cloudy Days, or does not appear in Foggy Regions. 'Tis enough to prove there is such a Luminary, if he shine clearer in other Climates, or by fits, though he be subject to Clouds and Eclipses as well as the Light of Nature.

So I do not see any necessity of Universal Consent, or Universal Uniformity, to declare a Principle to be Natural. How many are there, amongst all sorts of Men, who say, they can make no distinction of *Musical Sounds*, or of *Concords and Discords*? They say all Compositions for Voices or Instruments are equal to them, as to Pleasantness or Unpleasantness; only some are more Noisie than others, or of quicker or slower Time. Yet, I think, no Man will deny the Sense of Musick to be Natural to Mankind, without Ratiocination. So also, for *Beauty*. I do not mean that of Faces only, or Colour, but of Order, Proportion, Uniformity, or Regularity in general. This is very different in different Persons, and some scarce appear at all affected with it. Yet who does not think that some Notion or Idea of Order and Regularity, and of their Difference from Confusion or Disorder, is Natural to us? Even the Power of Reason, several Passions, a propensity to Laugh at ridiculous Objects or Actions, are more and less, and appear sooner in some than others. And this may be observ'd in Children, of whose Weakness you make great use, and frequent mention. If you allow these other Principles to be Natural, and born with us, I know not why you should make so much a-do about the word *Innate*. I should be glad to know if you allow any Powers or Principles to be *Innate*, in your sense of the word. If you allow none at all, not these last mention'd, nor so much as *willing* or *nilling* this or that, the Controversie will be chang'd; and I desire to know, what Idea

Idea you can form of a Soul, or of a Spirit, without any Powers or any Action. I wish that may not be the Supposition that lies at the bottom of your Philosophy, *That the Soul of Man is no distinct Substance from God or the Body* : but either a Divine Influence, or the Power of the Body. This hypothesis, I confess, may lead you to deny both innate Idea's and practical Principles.

To proceed a little further, you have an odd Exception in your 12th. Paragraph, to show that the Dictates of natural Conscience are not *Truths*, because they are not form'd into Propositions ; And to make them *capable of being assented to as Truths*, they must have the word *Duty* join'd to them. But, say you, *what duty is cannot be understood, without a Law : nor a Law be known or supposed without a Law-maker, or without Rewards and Punishments*. This to me is but Chicanry about words. But let us see how far these things make for you or against you ; Do we not *preserve our selves*, Do we not make use of *Reason*, without the formality of a Law, telling us, 'Tis our Duty to do these things ? Or in the case of natural Conscience, have we not the Marks and Sense of our Duty, and of the Will of our Maker from an inward Testimony, approving or disapproving our Actions, according as we obey or disobey that Principle in the distinction of Moral Good and Evil ? On the one hand,

Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum.

On the other, — *Hic murus aheneus esto,*
Nil conscire sibi.

These were both the Sayings of Heathens, that had no other Law than the Law of natural Conscience. And so their Apostle says, *They were a Law to themselves*, by help of that Principle. When you offer a Child *Bitter* instead of *Sweet*, he turns away his Head and makes grimaces, when he has no Law or Duty prescrib'd to him : nor any other Logick than what was born with him, or what he suck't from the Breasts of his Mother. Then as to Punishments and Rewards, there is a Presage of them from natural Conscience, and they are furthermore deducible from the Nature of God, if you allow him Moral Attributes, as we do. Indeed in your way, upon your

Idea

Idea of God, and your uncertainty of the Immortality of the Soul, I do not see how possibly you can prove future Rewards and Punishments without a Revelation: nor consequently give us a Foundation for Morality and natural Religion.

§. 13.

Ibid.

I must tell you again, that you bring such Arguments against Natural Conscience, as you might bring against Christian Religion. In your next Paragraph, put but Christianity in the room of *innate Principles*, and your Argument will be as good or as bad against either of them. The sum of your Argument is taken from the Topick of Universal Practice, as conformable or not conformable to the Rule. You say, it is impossible that Men should without shame or fear confidently break a Rule, which they could not but evidently know that God had set up, and would certainly punish the breach of, (Which they must if it were innate: Put in this place, Which they must if they were Christians) to a degree to make it a very ill Bargain, to the Transgressor. Does not this hit the Christians as well and as manifestly, as those that abuse natural Conscience? Then you say again, But let any one see the fault, and the Rod by it, and with the Transgression a Fire ready to punish it; A Pleasure tempting, and the Hand of the Almighty visibly held up, and prepared to take vengeance, (For this must be the case, where any Duty is imprinted upon the Mind: Put here; For this must be the case, where our Duty, as Christians, is manifestly known and acknowledged) and then tell me, whether it be possible for People, with such a prospect, such a certain knowledge as this, wantonly and without scruple to offend against a Law which they carry about with them, in indelible Characters, and that stares them in the face, whilst they are breaking it. Might not this, to our sorrow, be urg'd against Christians? Or to prove that the Law of Christianity is not known to them, or believed. Neither ought you to be offended that we transfer your Argument to Christians, seeing you your self, to prove that there is no Natural Conscience in our sence, have argued before, from the Practice of Christians, as well as Heathens. You alledge the Practice of the *Mengrelians*: You instance in *Duels* and *bloody Wars*, &c. amongst Christians. You might have applied all these things particularly to Christians; but still we should have thought it no good Proof that there is no Christian Law, no more than it is, that there is no Natural Conscience. Do we not see Men, every day, in spite of Laws, External or Internal,

Internal, Divine or Humane, pursue their Lusts, Passions, and vicious Inclinations? Though they have not only the Terrors of another Life to keep them in awe and order, but see before their eyes, Gaols, Gibbets, Irons, Whips, Racks, and Torturing Engines; Examples also of miserable Creatures suffering actually for those very Crimes. If all these united Forces and Restraints cannot keep them from extravagant Evils, can we think it strange, that the single Principle of Natural Conscience should be suppress'd or suffocated by the Stupidity or Vices incident to Humane Nature.

In your next Section, you call for a List of the Laws or Principles of Conscience: And so the Papists do for a Catalogue of *Fundamentals*. And it would be easie to give them one, if there was but one Fundamental, (as a certain late Author supposes.) As to the Dictates or Principles of Natural Conscience, (call them Laws of Nature, or what you please) we say, in general, that they are for the distinction of Moral Good and Evil: But the Cases are innumerable, (as in other Cases of Conscience) wherein there may be occasion for their Exercise. The general Rule is, *Appeal with Sincerity to your Conscience for your Direction*: If that be obscur'd, perverted or fear'd, we cannot help it. So your great Topicks or Demands of Universal Consent, Universal Practice, Invincible Evidence, are not to be found in this miscellaneous World, and under all the corruptions of Humane Nature. These Principles of Conscience, are Seeds, as we said before, that may die, or may thrive, and spring more or less, according to the Soil they are set in, and according to the care and culture that is had of them.

This minds me of your *Dilemma* in a following Section, which you propose as very powerful or conclusive, in these words; *But concerning Innate Principles, I desire those Men to say, whether they can, or cannot, by Education and Custom, be blurr'd and blotted out.* If they can, we must find them clearest and most perspicuous, nearest the fountain, in Children, and illiterate People who have receiv'd least impression from foreign Opinions. Let them take which side they please, they will certainly find it inconsistent with *visible Matter of Fact, and daily Observation*.

The Close, you hear, is in an high Tone. But for trial of this Argument, let us use the same method here, which we did before: And as then we put Christianity in the room of *Innate Principles*,

S. 14.

S. 15.

S. 20.

Principles, so put now in their place the Power and Principle of Reasoning. So the Sentence will run thus; But concerning this Power or Principle of Reasoning, I desire these Men to say, whether it can, or cannot, by Education and Custom, (or contrary Principles; for that we must take in, if we speak of Natural Conscience) be blurr'd or blotted out. If they cannot, says he, they must be alike in all Men. If they can, they must be clearest in Children before they are corrupted. We say, neither of these will follow: These Powers may be weak in Children, and may be blurr'd or blotted in several Persons, and yet be Natural Principles; as we see it is in the Principle of Reason or Reasoning.

All Men will distinguish betwixt a *Power*, and the Actual and Prevailing *Exercise* of that Power; which may be hindred by various Circumstances; and tho' Natural to *Rational Creatures*, may be weak in some, and ineffectual in others, by contrary Principles, or other Impediments. I see this word *Innate* is still a Stumbling-stone: And we must ask again, whether you allow any Powers to be *Innate* to Mankind? We say, those mention'd Powers are *Innate*; but the Exercise of them, more or less, is *Conditional*, and depends upon the Disposition of the Body, Culture, and other Circumstances.

Thus much I have said, in defence of Natural Conscience, and Natural Religion. I must now ask leave to reflect upon a Passage in my last Letter. I there told you, That I writ as a private Person, without conference or confederacy with any other, (any more than I suppose you to do.) But I told you also, That I could not blame any other, whosoever they are or may be, that desire such Principles of *Humane Understanding* as may give them good Proofs and Security against such a System as this, *Cogitant Matter*, a *Mortal Soul*, a *Manichaean God*, (or a *God without Moral Attributes*) and an *Arbitrary Law of Good and Evil*. As to the Arbitrary Law of Good and Evil, I gave you my Thoughts against it, in that Letter: And what is now said about *Natural Conscience*, tends to the same effect. As to a *Manichaean God*, if he have no Moral Attributes, we cannot tell, from your Idea of him, but he may prove so. Then for the *Immortality of the Soul*, you seem now to have declar'd your self uncertain of it, without Revelation. Lastly, for *Cogitant Matter*, this you propose as a *Problem*, which you are unable or unwilling to decide.

I do

I do not willingly dispute about what is Possible or Impossible to God, (for we cannot comprehend an Infinite Nature) but rather what is *Conceivable* or *Unconceivable* to us. And I will not assert any thing *Possible*, that is *Unconceivable*, unless I have positive Assurance, Divine or Humane, that it is Possible. Now you bring no positive Evidence of this Possibility of Cogitation in Matter ; and I think it unconceivable, according to our Faculties and Conceptions, that Matter should be capable of Cogitation, as a power of Matter, either *Innate* or *Impress'd*. My Reasons are these ; That Unity we find in our Perceptions, is such an Unity, as, in my judgment, is incompetent to Matter, by reason of the Division or Distinction of its Parts. All our Perceptions, whether of Sense, Passions, Reason, or any other Faculty, are carried to one *Common Percipient*, or one common Conscious Principle. For we compare them all, one with another, and censure them all, which cannot be done without one Common Judge or Percipient. Pray then tell us, what part of the Body is that, which you make the *Common Percipient* : Or, if that be too much, tell us how any one part of the Body may or can be so. If you say they are many ; then let us know how they conferr Notions, or tell one another what they have perceiv'd in their several Districts. Still they must come, however, to one *Common Percipient*, either by Conference, or at the first Perception ; and you are oblig'd to assign this part of the Body, that we may examine whether it be capable of such a Function, or no. I know it hath been attempted by some Persons, but not so (if I understand them right) as to make that Corporeal part the *Percipient*, but the Soul exercising her Functions there. But if the Body be Cogitant, some one part must be the Grand Cogitant, or *Common Percipient*. Now seeing this *Percipient*, what or wheresoever it is, consists of many Parts or Particles, it is obnoxious to the same Exceptions we made before ; and is still, upon the same grounds, incapable of performing that function.

In one part of your *Essay*, you seem to have ratified this Argument, and apply it to *Motion*. You say, in a System S. 17. of Matter, 'Tis impossible that any one Particle should either know its own, or the Motion of any other Particle, or the whole know the Motion of every particular. Put Cogitation now in the place of

Motion, and the same Argumentation holds good : As thus, 'Tis impossible that any one part or particle should know the Cogitations of any other Parts or Particles, or the whole know the Cogitations of every particular. Therefore there must be some other Common Percipient (that is not material) both for the Regulation of the Motions of the Body, and for the recollecting and judging of the several different Perceptions that come to the Soul. I may further add, That not only the different Perceptions that come to the Soul from different Parts and Motions of the Body, but also the different Operations of the Mind or Understanding : Simple Apprehension, Judgment, Ratiocination, must all lie under the Prospect, Intuition and Correction of some one Common Principle ; and that must be a Principle of such a perfect unity and simplicity, as the Body, any part of the Body, or any particle of Matter is not capable of.

And as Matter is not capable of the Operations of the *Understanding*, so far as we can judge ; so neither is it capable of the Operations of the *Will*. 'Twere an odd thing, to fancies that a piece of Matter should have *Free Will*, and an absolute Power like a little Emperor on his Throne, to command, as his Slaves about him, all other Parts of Matter. Say to one come, and he cometh ; to another, Go, and he goeth ; and to a third, Do this, and he doeth it ? Yet such a *Liberty of Will*, and such a Dominion we experience in our Soul, namely, a Power of commanding or countermanding her own Thoughts, and the Motions of the Body. Now suppose this Power transferr'd to Matter ; A Power, first, to determine its own Motions, and then to determine its supposed Cogitations. As to the motions of Matter, The general Rule is, that it moves always in a straight Line, till it be determin'd otherwise by some external Agent or impulse. But if it have a Power of determining its own Motions, it may move in a *Curve* line, or any sort of *Curve*, of its own accord, without any external Determination. If this be admitted, all our rules in Philosophy or Mechanicks are in vain, and we must assert things whereof we have no Idea or Conception. And what is said of Motion, may also be said of Figure or Situation. A Globe may change it self into a Cube, or a Cube into a Pyramid, or any other figure, by its own *Free Will*. For we find the Soul hath that Power of changing the Conformation of the Eye, for instance, or

or of the Hand, or other Parts. But if you say, That Power indeed is not granted to all Matter, but to certain Systems of Matter; still seeing those Systems are compos'd of common Matter, we must judge their Powers to be the same with those of common Matter, till the contrary be made out by Positive Evidence. However you must fix this Self-moving Faculty to some one part of that System (for every part hath not that Power and Free Will, upon any Supposition) and when you have assign'd that *Divine Self-moving Part* or Particle of the Body, we shall examine the Powers and Capacities of it.

Thus much concerning the capacity of *Free Will* in matter with respect to *Motion*. As to our *Cogitations*, (which have been partly spoken of before) we find that the Determination of them lies under the command of *Free Will* in a great measure; we turn our Thoughts from one Object to another, we recall past Thoughts, and retrieve lost or half-lost Notices: And we consider and deliberate about our Actions, which is best, and then make our choice. Upon these accounts, there must be a *common Percipient* and a *common Volent* in *Conjunction*; for these must communicate, and be in one and the same Subject. What then is said before to prove that no Part of the Body is capable of being the *common Percipient*, is now strengthen'd, when we add *Volition* to all the other Operations it must be conscious of. For the more the *direct* Operations are that must be united in one and the same Subject, and the more *reflex* Operations are superadded upon those *direct*, still under the *Cognizance* and *Dijudication* of the same Principle, the greater unity and simplicity is requir'd in that Principle or the *Grand Cogitant*, that performs them all, and receives them all without confusion. And you say your self, *Unthinking Particles of Matter, howsoever put together, can have nothing thereby added to them, but a new relation of Position, which 'tis impossible should give Thought and Knowledge to them.* Upon this it may be said, If being put together in a System, add nothing new but a new Position; then, as it does not add Thought and Knowledge, so neither does it add a new capacity of Thought or Knowledge. But enough, hath been said concerning the Incapacities of Matter (whether *in* or *out* of a System) to perform the Functions of a Spirit; I will only add this as to *Free Will*, If Matter be capable of it,

If it can deliberate, consult, chuse or refuse, then Matter is capable of *Vertue and Vice, Duty and Religion, Merit and Demerit*, and also of *Punishments and Rewards*; Which Hypothesis about the Powers of Matter, as to the *Will*, would pervert all our rules in Moral Philosophy: as the former about the *Understanding*, all in Natural.

Neither do I see a Capacity in any Part of the Body for *Memory or Remembrance*, especially as to some Idea's. Take what part you please to be *Cogitant and Reminiscent*, (I suppose 'twill be some part in the Brain,) all our new acquir'd Idea's must work some change in that Part, and leave some Marks there for a foundation of Memory. But we have some Idea's that have no Corporeal Marks in the Brain, as those of *Relations, Proportions, universal and abstract Notions*; Yet of these and such like, we have both Perception and Memory: And as to those Objects which leave some Impressions upon the Brain, 'tis still unconceivable how those Impressions, whatsoever they are, should be fixt and continue so long as our Memory does: in a piece of fluxile Matter, that wasts, spends, and changes day after day. And yet this is not all that is in *Memory*, for there is a *Relative Sense* besides, whereby we perceive that we had formerly perceiv'd the same thing. Which reduplication of the Act and relative Perception the Brain bears no part in, nor hath it any Mark there, but must be the Action of another Substance distinct from it, and from all Matter.

To these Reflections upon the Nature of our Faculties, and the Powers of Matter, It would not be fair, nor satisfactory, to give us a short Answer and tell us, *Everything is possible to God*. 'Tis true, every thing that is possible, is possible to God; but we must also consider the Capacities or Incapacities of the Subject. *Quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum Recipientis*. And what you suppose possible may be suppos'd actual. *Possibili posito in actu, nihil sequitur absurdum*. Pardon these old Axioms by which you are oblig'd to vindicate the actual existence of such Powers and Properties as we are treating of, from absurdity; and to make them intelligible if you would have them receiv'd.

I formerly mentioned (in the first Letter) a general Consideration which might justly induce us to believe that Matter

is

is not capable of the Powers of Cogitation. For if it were, the existence of Finite immaterial Spirits would be superfluous; seeing Matter alone, or certain parcels of Matter (with this Power or Impress) would be able to perform all their Operations. But I leave that to your further Thoughts. However I conceive such a Power acting in Matter, or impress'd upon it, could not be call'd the Power of Matter, no more than Motion is the Power of Matter. In Motion, you know properly so call'd, besides the change of Situation, there is a *Vis movens*, which is not the Power of Matter, nor any Modification of it; but the Power of a Superior Agent acting Matter. In like manner, If there was a *Vis cogitans* in the Body, or in any other Matter, it would not be a Power of Matter, nor any Modification of it, any more than the *Vis movens* is. Suppose Light piercing and illuminating a transparent Body, that Light is not the Power of the Body, but of the Sun or some other Luminary. The Body is only Passive, whereas Power always signifies something Active.

We can distinctly conceive the Mechanical Properties of Matter, and what results from them; but as Cogitation cannot be any of those, nor an effect of any of them, so neither can I any more conceive the Power of Intellection or Ratiocination communicated to certain Systems of Matter, than I can conceive *Penetration of Dimensions* communicated to certain Parts or Systems of Matter; or a Power of being in *several places at once*; Both which, you know, are by some made communicable to a Body. If we grant such Arbitrary Powers whereof we have no Idea or Conception, to be communicable to Matter, there will be no end of imputing Powers to Matter, according to every one's Fancy or Credulity. Let us take another instance about *Occult qualities*; suppose one say, That certain *Stones*, which he knows, have an attractive or expulsive Power, at a Thousand Miles distance, without any contact or pressure (mediate or immediate) upon the Bodies they attract or expel; we must take the liberty to disbelieve or dissent from this Vertuoso, as asserting a thing unconceivable to our Faculties. For if we do not bound our Philosophy by some Rules, and give some Reason or Ground for what we affirm or deny, we do but ramble in a Wilderness without Rule

Rule or Compass : and what we call *Science*, is nothing but Conceit and imaginary Suppositions.

As to the state of that Question , How far Cogitation is communicable to Matter ? We allow that a Spirit may act and Cogitate in Matter, and be so united to some Systems of it, that there may be a reciprocation of Actions and Passions betwixt them, according to the Laws of their Union. But still all these Cogitations are the Powers of the Spirit, not of the Matter. Suppose in Voluntary Motion, which proceeds from the *Will*, If that Will may be the Power of Matter, then it may have the Power of Motion, or of the Determination of Motion. And it seems to me an easier Supposition to make a *Vis movens* communicable to Matter , (which I think cannot be allow'd) than a *Vis cogitans*. If they both be the Powers of Matter, Innate or Superadded, God and Matter are the whole of the Universe, without particular Spirits or Spiritual Substances , permanent and distinct in their Individuation.

And this, under favour, I cannot but think is the Mystery aim'd at all along, but conceal'd from us. Nor do I find any easier Key to decypher this Philosophy, and to make it consistent one part with another, than to take that Supposition, *That God and Matter are the whole of the Universe*, as a general Ground of it. And especially of those Parts that I have had occasion to reflect upon, or such others as depend upon them. If I have mistaken your sence in this, 'Tis owing either to my want of Discernment and Penetration, or to your Reservednes and Ambiguity of Expression. But however you may ease us in either case, by declaring frankly what your Sentiments are as to this grand Point. Which if you please to do, as I know the Opinion is not new or unheard of before, (a known Sect of the *Jews*, and another of the *Arabians*, besides some *Greeks* and *Romans* having been noted for it;) So I shall not load it with *Odium*, but only examine it fairly according to the best Light I have, for a further Discovery or Confirmation of the Truth.

This Notion that One Infinite Mind and Matter make up the Universe, seems to me, I say, the common Centre wherein the great Lines of your Discourse meet and terminate. And this same Notion I take to be the Root of Philosophical Deism, properly

properly so call'd, (for I do not oppose it here to Christianity or Reveal'd Religion) which as it springs up, spreads it self into several Branches. You disown and very well refute the *Materialist*, who would have but one single Substance in the World, namely Matter. But as to the Philosophical Deists, who are more considerable and moderate, holding two Principles, *Matter and universal Mind*, I do not find that your Notions do at all disagree with that Hypothesis. Nay, if I be not mistaken, this is the common source from whence they rise, or the common Receptacle into which they run. Let us compare them a little, if you please, to observe their Agreement or Disagreement.

The grand Principle of that Deism we speak of, I conceive is this; There's one Infinite universal Spirit that actuates Matter always; and according to the different dispositions and Systems of Matter, it exercises different Operations, Rational, Sensitive, or Vegetative. So as these are not the Powers or Operations of particular and individual Spirits, distinct from the Universal, but the several Influences and Effects of the universal Spirit, as the different Compositions and Modifications of Matter will permit. This Doctrine *Virgil* is thought to have express'd, and makes *Archises* among the Dead, to deliver it as an *Arcanum* to his Son *Aeneas*, in these words,

Principio cælum, ac terras, cæmposq; liquentes,

Encid. 6.

Lucentemq; globum Lune, Titaniaque astra

Spiritus intus alit, totamq; infusa per artus

Mens agitat molem, & magno se corpore miscet.

Inde Hominum pecudumq; genus, Viraq; volantum,

Et qua marmoreo fert monstra sub aquore Pontus.

This, you see, takes in both rational and irrational Creatures, as he had done before in a like Description; but our concern is only for rational Natures and the Soul of Man. And if the Soul of Man be nothing but an influx from another Principle, not a distinct permanent Substance, and the Principle of its own Actions, whosoever goes upon this Principle, I do not wonder if he cannot allow innate Idea's, or

practical

practical Principles in the Soul. For there is no permanent Soul or distinct Substance to imprint them upon; They are the Operations of another Being, and exerted according to the Dispositions of the Body, or may be wholly intermitted when the Body is asleep. This, I think, they speak coherently with the former Position. Moreover upon that Hypothesis, The Soul cannot be said to be *Immortal*, or to act and operate after the dissolution of the Body; for the Body then is no further capable of those Influences.

Furthermore, in consequence of this Principle of Deism and the Mortality of the Soul, great Doubts and Difficulties must needs arise to them about the *Resurrection*. How it can be the *same Man* or the *same Person* that rises again, when both the Body and the Soul are *new*. And this would bring on nice Disputes about the Notions of *Identity* and *Diversity*. Which accordingly we find discuss'd at large in the *Essay*, for their Satisfaction, I suppose, that go upon those Principles.

B.2. c.27. I will mention another Doubt or Dispute, which arises from that Principle, *viz.* *That the Soul is not a Substance distinct from God and Matter.* From this Position a Question springs up concerning the *Powers of Matter*, or whether Matter be not capable of Cogitation. If the Soul be not a Substance distinct from God and Matter, then all our Cogitations are either the Operations of God, or the Operations of Matter; there being no third Substance to be the Subject of them. This being the case, They chuse (as of two inconveniences the less) to make Matter the Subject of them, rather than God; adding this temperament, That Matter hath not this Power of Cogitation from it self, but as impress'd or communicated to it from God. Neither do they positively assert (so far as I know) this Power of Cogitation in Matter, either innate or impress'd; but leave that as a floating Problem, which they will not determine either way. But seeing this Controversie takes its Original only from their Principles, they are bound to decide it, or declare which part they will take.

I have noted those Doctrines, you see, which chiefly relate to the *Soul of Man*, and are found agreeable to, or consequential upon

upon the Principles of the Deists. If they be further try'd upon the *Idea of God*, as you have glynen it without Moral Attributes, only as a Supreme Being, Eternal, All-knowing, most Powerful; no Deist, of one sort or other, will be excluded by this Idea, nor any party of Men, except meer Atheists, if yet there be any such Monsters amongst Men. So that still, in all these Principles (and these are the chief Principles to be depended upon, in reference to Morality and Religion) there is nothing, so far as I can observe, higher than Deism; neither do I know the scope or occasion of some Discourses in this *Essay*, upon any other Suppositions than those we have mentioned.

But I speak this with due regard always to better Information, and must take it at present for a kind of *Rationale* to that learned Work, to see the dependance of one part upon another: However, I will take the liberty to say, that the Author cannot, upon those Principles, give us (as is pretended) a *Demonstrative Morality*, as clear as *Mathematicks*. He may give us a set of *Prudential Maxims* for the Conveniences of Life, or a kind of *Political Righteousness*, but will never reach what is most Sacred and Divine either in Morality or Religion. I wish him, however, good success, that it may not be said, *Parturient Montes*.

SIR. If you please to declare your Thoughts more freely concerning these things, especially as to the *Nature of God*, and the *Soul of Man*, you may state the case more distinctly, and bring it to an issue, which is all I desire. I shall only give it a Friendly Consideration; and accordingly I request that you would manage it with calm Reason, without Wrath or Bitterness.

*Diss prætextus ille est,
Quem Ratio, non Ira moveret.*

I am, SIR,

Your Humble Servant.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE Epicurean Philosophers have given us a *Method of Science*, without any other Principles than what are collected from *Sense* and *Experience*; which I take to be the same in effect with your Method. And it may be useful indeed within its Sphere: to make Men attend to their Evidence that it be real, and to beat out of the Schools some empty Notions or Notionalities. But as it does not reach the first Criterion, or the first Discriminations we make of *True and False*; so also in reference to *Good and Evil*, those Principles fall short and will not bear, when they come to lay a Foundation for Morality and Religion. They can carry us no higher than *Epicurus's Ethics*, still within the compass of a *Temporal Felicity*, and provision for it. These Authors must either go upon a Principle of *Private Self-Preservation* for the Basis of their *Morals*, or of the *Preservation of Society*; They have no higher Principle that I know, seeing they make no *Intrinsic* and *Essential* Distinction of *Good* and *Evil*: nor include *Goodness*, *Justice*, and other *Moral Attributes* in the Idea of the *Divine Nature*. Nor can prove the *Immortality of the Soul*, or a *future state of Punishments and Rewards*; And their Notion of *Conscience*, of *Virtue and Vice*, *Good and Evil*, (without distinction of *Natural* and *Moral*) are so lax and general, and have so little *Sacred* in them, that they seem to me to stand upon the very same level with the rest. But if others can deduce better things from those Principles, I should be glad to see it done.

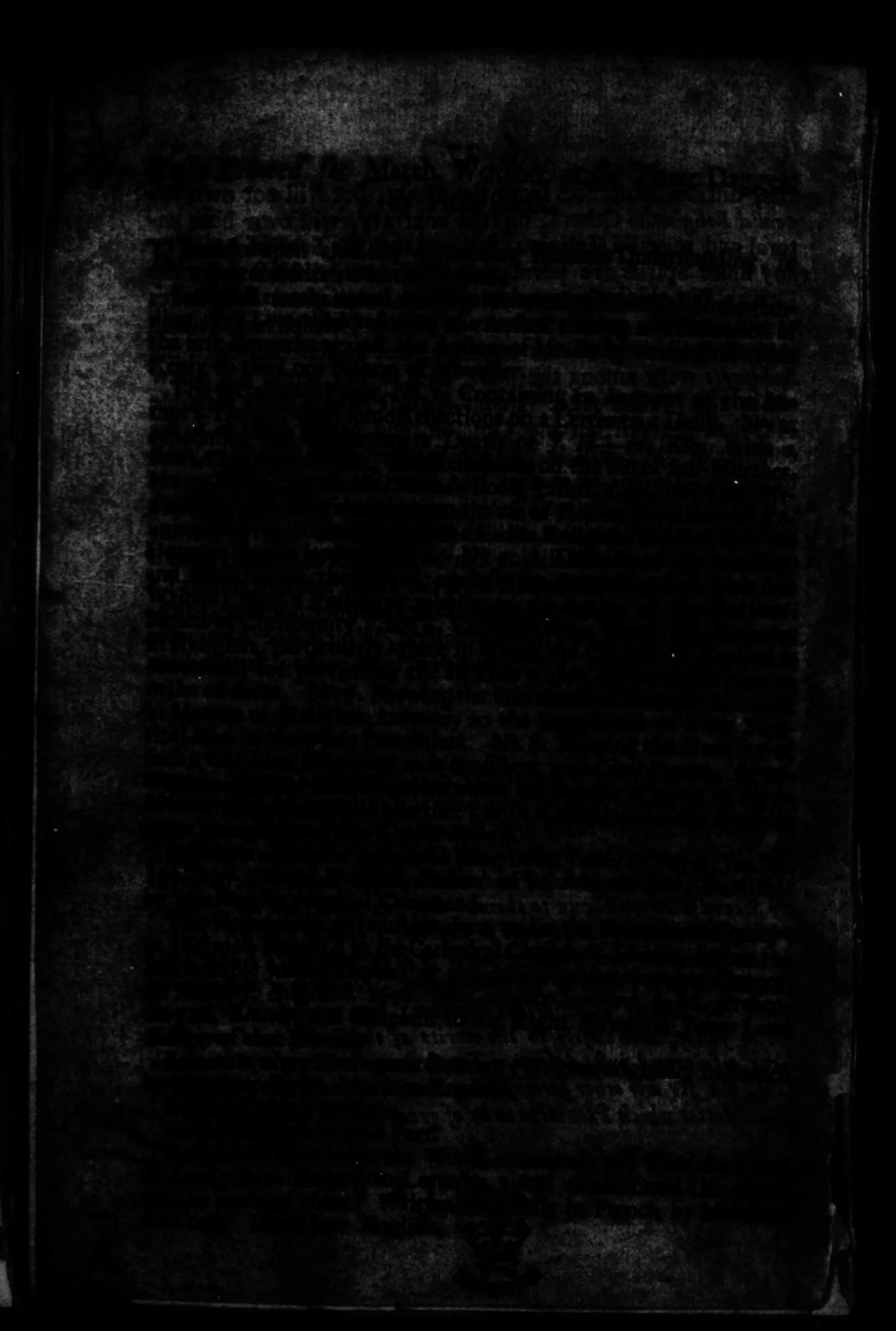
Yet I do not account the Epicurean Philosophers to be *Atheists*, but rather a sort of *Deists*: for there are several sorts of Men under that denomination. Those that are mere *Materialists*, and own no *Deity* distinct from *Matter*, are the very worst *Deists*, and scarce deserve that name or title, tho' they pretend to it. Others that own an *Immaterial Deity*, and that *Matter* is not the only *Substratum* of all things, are yet distinguishable into different Parties, both in respect of their *natural Principles* and *Religious*. Some of them will own not only an *immaterial Deity*, but also *particular, finite, immaterial Spirits*,

rits, distinct Substances from the Deity, but will not own reveal'd Religion. Others, on the contrary, will own both natural and reveal'd Religion, but not that the Soul of Man, or any finite Spirits are permanent Substances, distinct from the Deity; But think them only transient Irradiations or Effluxes of the Deity in certain Systems of Matter; which hold as long as those Systems of Matter continue, and no longer. Such the Sadducees were among the Jews, and so I'm afraid not a few are in the present Age. I confess these have a more plausible Plea than the rest, in my Opinion, and better deserve to be consider'd. We will if you please, for distinction sake, call them *Semi-Deists*: or if they like that title better, *Semi-materialists*. And my Business hath been to show, that upon those foremention'd Principles, which I take to be theirs, neither natural nor reveal'd Religion can be Establish'd. I add *reveal'd Religion*, seeing it is manifest that the truth and certainty of a Revelation as to us, depends upon the Goodness, Justice, Faithfulness and Veracity of the Revealer. Which are Attributes they do not mention, or do not proye to belong to the Idea of God.

SIR,

AS to the setting or not setting a Name to my Remarks, I have given Reasons before, and have this to superadd. If you had writ a civil Answer to my first Remarks, as they were a civil and respectful Enquiry into the Sense and Consequences of your Principles, in reference to those Heads I had mention'd, I should have sent you my Second with my Name to them. But you made such an Answer, with an overrapping Arrogance or Contempt, that it was not decent for me (whether you would think it so as to your self, I know not) that the Writer should be farther known. No Man is willing to be made the Subject of injurious Speeches, how underv'd soever. Write fairly, and closely to the merits of the Cause, and you shall have a fair and just Answer. For I do not write for Contention sake, nor for any other Interest than that of the discovery of Truth, in a Matter which I conceive to be of great Extent and Concern.

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